

CUMBERLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

A special meeting of the Cumberland School Committee was held on Tuesday, October 5, 2010 at the Cumberland High School Library, 2600 Mendon Road, Cumberland, Rhode Island.

Agenda Item #1: Chairman Convenes Meeting

Chairman Costa convened the meeting at 7:36 p.m.

Members Present: Lisa Beaulieu, Donald Costa, Jeff Mutter, Ryan Pearson, Dan Pedro, Earl Wood, Brian Kelly was not present.

Staff Present: Donna A. Morelle, Ed.D., Superintendent, Joseph A. Rotella, Esq., Director of Administration, Dr. Lisa Colwell, Director of Special Services, Fred Schockaert, Dep. Director of Special Services, Alex Prignano, Business Manager.

Agenda Item #2: Approval of Agenda

Mr. Pearson made a motion to move Item #5 – Vote to go into Executive Session (A and B) – to Item #2, 2nd by Lisa Beaulieu, approved 6-0. Mr. Pearson then made a motion to go into Executive Session (A and B), 2nd by Mr. Mutter, approved 6-0.

The School Committee members left the library at 7:46 p.m. for

Executive Session and they returned at 7:56 p.m. – Chairman Costa reconvened the meeting.

Agenda Item #3: Workshop Discussion on District Transportation

Present for the workshop were several representatives from Durham Transportation, Chief John Desmarais – Cumberland Police Chief, Frank Geiselman – Director of Transportation, Richard Hilton – Director of Buildings and Grounds, Michael Chandler – IT Director, members of the Transportation Team, members of the community.

Mr. Costa started off by asking where we are at present, where are we going and what can be done? It was noted that Chief Desmarais has reviewed all the routes and has determined problem stops/routes. Durham acknowledged the Chief and his staff for working so well with Durham and also the quick turnaround. The Chief pointed out that he has made some recommendations to stops, but wanted to know the definition of overload.

Mr. Costa pointed out that eligible riders are not necessarily going to be riding the busses – junior, seniors, etc., for example – some parents consistently drive their children to and from school. Mr. Costa also mentioned that one scenario he looked at had 108 high school students on a bus, but yet the high school busses are never filled to capacity in all actuality. Mr. Costa suggested to Durham to figure out the number of students riding the busses the same way they have always done it – seniors graduate, freshman are replacing them, etc. Durham said that eligibility vs. ridership changes throughout the year, seems lots of routes have a decline in them as

the school year progresses. Durham is using the same approach on overloading as any other year – if the driver notices that he is at capacity, he will call dispatch and ask for another bus. Durham will not allow the students to ride the bus if it is overloaded. If Durham needs to add more busses to the district this will effect the entire time line of this project. Dr. Morelle asked about the dry runs that had been completed to date and wondered if the drivers doing these runs would be the actual drivers on those routes. Durham said that once the route is established they would give the senior drivers their choice of routes, possibly the same drivers from last year on the same routes – after Durham establishes the driver, the dry runs would be completed. The issue went back to the Chief approving the routes – he determined 25 issues with the routes that he had reviewed – possible overcrowding – but the numbers that the Chief had were projected number of students or eligible students – so the actual numbers of riders may be lower, but Durham has to figure out how to work this situation out. Durham has busses that will carry as many as 72 students and some that will carry 84 students. Mr. Pearson asked if the routes out now are similar to last years? Durham noted that one stop had 198 eligible riders last year and this year there are 128 eligible riders – children move, stop changes, parents may drive the child, etc., the stops are still there but there also may be a different bus. Mrs. Beaulieu asked about the overload solution, would it be taking historical data and projected students? Durham's response was that overcrowding has been like this for several years, and their drivers have always had the ability and instruction to call for

another bus – they have proven this over the years – the drivers always call for additional busses if needed. Mr. Costa asked where the overcrowding was happening the most – elementary and middle busses should have a high ridership, they do have tight capacities at the elementary level. Mr. Wood thought that Durham would be needing the 84 student capacity busses for the Cumberland Hill students because of the number of students in that area. Durham noted that eligibility and ridership are pretty much the same at elementary and middle school levels, they are pretty much on the mark – they don't change very much, not like the high school. Because of the number of tiers, we have bigger busses going to the south of town, but because of times and bell times in elementary, Durham says they have to do that. Durham says they have pulled an Ashton route away from one of the Cumberland Hill busses in hopes of not being late to Cumberland Hill all the time. Mr. Costa asked how many 84 student busses were in Durham's fleet and the answer was three. Mr. Pearson wants to make sure that the Chief is reviewing and signing off on the most efficient numbers and that Durham needs to do a historical ratio, he wants a comparison of last years eligibility vs. actual riders. Mr. Rotella reiterated that the Chief needs insurance that if a bus is overloaded – he needs to be sure that the driver will call for another bus – state law says the bus cannot move if it is overcrowded. Durham again stated that the drivers do communicate with dispatch for other busses. Mr. Costa noted that at the high school there are 19 busses and never has he seen any of them filled to capacity – sometimes there are 10 students on one bus. Mrs.

Beaulieu pointed out that putting 72 or 84 elementary students on a bus is much roomier than putting 72 or 84 high school students. Durham stated that the routes are at legal capacity whether elementary or high school students. Mr. Mutter thought that by looking at the routes we would need at least 5 of the 84 student capacity busses just at Cumberland Hill and the Durham fleet only has 3 of that size. Durham said they have taken the information from the Chief and have adjusted or moved routes/stops and therefore the numbers on the busses have been adjusted accordingly. Dr. Morelle was wondering if Durham had completed a spreadsheet that had revised route plans on it – they were supposed to lay out stops, etc., from last year. Kindergarten stops were supposed to be listed with last years stops and this years stops prior to implementation – wanted to know variance. Durham stated that the mid-day routes are not changing. Mr. Wood was concerned about the fact that Kindergarten students from Cumberland Hill go to Community and if a parent has one in K and one in the first grade, it would be impossible for the parent to be at two places for two different stops and times. Durham could not give a clear answer/solution to this problem but said that they would work with the parents because these are exceptions and they would be happy to work with the families involved. Mrs. Beaulieu asked if there was a form that the family could fill out and submit to someone so that their situation would be examined. Mr. Geiselman stated that those types of problems, concerns come directly to him. Durham said that the communication of the “rollout” would be in the newspaper and/or

possibly a letter being sent home – so that this could allow for questions and answers before the actual start. Mr. Pearson asked if all concerned could come up with a time schedule for solving problems and/or change requests. Durham stated that typically it takes one to two business days until the requests are taken care of – these requests/concerns usually come through Mr. Geiselman. Mr. Costa agreed that the changes come through Mr. Geiselman and typically take one to two business days for completion. Mr. Geiselman said that the current form states on the front side to allow for 5 days for the request to take place, however, one to two days has historically been the norm. He went on to say that if the parent is requesting a stop change, then it gets referred to the police department and depending on the circumstances, etc., we always get back to everyone in the normal time frame – or close to it. Actually, depending on the request, Mr. Geiselman and Beth (at Durham) have taken care of the request in a matter of hours – sometimes the request comes in during the morning and the request is for the same day and it does happen that same day! Dr. Morelle wanted to make sure that when the Chief has reviewed the route changes and Durham confirms that the route changes are done, that they will confirm arrival and departure times and that is when the School Committee will review and approve. Durham said the Chief will have the routes to review on Thursday(the 7th of October). Mr. Pearson would like the entire set of routes to go to the Chief – just to keep things in order – although the Chief does feel comfortable with 20 of the routes – it will be the 25 that he had issues with that he will be concentrating on.

On the 25 that the Chief had concerns with, Durham will be supplying historical data and the Chief will review the routes again and the School Committee will get a complete copy after the review is completed. Mr. Wood wanted to make sure that Durham will be validating the stop times, because he was concerned about some of the times. One public comment was made about the fact that bus drivers are not announcing their arrival and departures and the monitors are not doing their 3 pt. inspections in their neighborhood. It was noted and will be looked into by Durham and it was also noted that the monitors are employed by the town not Durham, but that in the past they have always worked as a team and will continue to do so in the future. Durham noted that the stops are working right now, the times are working, they have been working in the past and this is one of the reasons that their drivers do the dry runs. Mrs. Beaulieu asked who was responsible for supervising the monitors to see if they are doing their job and also if there was a problem, who would you call. Dr. Morelle noted that any transportation issue needs to go to Frank Geiselman, he will bring it to anyones attention that he believes would help to correct the situation. Durham also stated that if there is a problem, the family could call them and let them know, because they feel that ultimately they are responsible for those students on the bus and there is constant communication between Durham and Mr. Geiselman, so the situation would be dealt with immediately either way.

Dr. Morelle passed around a sample letter that was developed after meeting with PTO presidents and school principals, regarding the

most efficient manner in which to pass on information – whether it be connect ed phone call, letter home to parents, etc. Mr. Pearson asked how long the Chief would need to complete his review. Chief stated that if he gets the information on Thursday, he will have the traffic officer work on them and thought that by next Tuesday or Wednesday, the process would be complete. Mr. Pearson would like to put the approval of the routes on next weeks School Committee meeting agenda. Mr. Pearson was also thinking about maybe a 10/25 implementation- would this be possible? Dr. Morelle reiterated the fact that the district wants this implemented in October, not November. Implementation 10/25 or 10/27, which will give about a week after the School Committee approves it – if they approve it, need to start at the beginning of the week not the end of the week. Durham suggested starting on a Tuesday so that the teachers can remind the students on Monday. NECAP testing will be over by 10/25 so this would be a good time to implement. Mr. Wood asked if the same notification letter would be going to Mercymount students and Democracy Prep – if Durham does it they can send the letter to the public school students and their other contracted school students. Maybe the letter should be a collaborative between the School Committee, School Department and Durham. One public comment was made about the amount of time a pre-k child spends on the bus and state law suggests that a student cannot stay on a bus for longer than one hour each way – the length of the bus ride depends on where the child is originating from. Another public comment referred to the amount of time that busses are waiting in line to load the

students – walkers go first at some schools – it was noted that each school is reviewing their dismissal for safety reasons as well as the timing. The timetable is as follows: Changes to Chief by 10/7, Chief to complete review by 10/12 or 10/13, School Committee to approve changes/routes 10/14, implementation 10/25 – 10/27. Mr. Mutter asked that if they approve the routes on 10/14 and then later there are changes made, will those changes come back to the School Committee for approval. Durham was under the impression, based on the contract, that the Superintendent or designee could approve the later changes, but Mr. Mutter thought the policy needed to be reviewed. Mr. Rotella noted that if the request is to change a bus stop, etc., then the School Committee needs to approve, but if it is for a simple change where a student needs to be picked up at a different stop, then Mr. Geiselman needs to take care of this – that should not need School Committee approval. Mr. Rotella went on to say that if it is a bus stop or route change, the Police Chief needs to review it and send it to the School Committee for approval. Durham said that after the approval on the 14th, they think that letters should be distributed to the community - they thought maybe Dr. Morelle could set up a meeting to start laying out what will happen and when. A public comment was made regarding where the students are waiting for the busses in Lippett Estates – neighbors said it was very dangerous where the students are currently standing and with the colder weather and bad weather approaching, it will only get worse. They would like to see the stop moved from its current location to under the 295 overpass – it is wider and would be much more safer and also

would keep the students out of the inclement weather. Another comment was made about Stoneyview and Branch – sometimes there are 60 students waiting for the bus at a four way intersection – very dangerous. These neighbors would also like to see this stop moved. Mr. Pearson noted that we need responses on both instances. Mr. Geiselman noted that if we change the current policy on changes and bring everything before the School Committee or alternate for approvals, this could take 2-3 weeks to implement certain changes, where it is taking 1-2 days currently. Mr. Pearson thought that if it was a safety issue then the Chief can make the approval and work with Mr. Geiselman to change the route/stop. Mr. Rotella reiterated this – the police department needs to know that the stop is unsafe and it can be reviewed immediately. Mrs. Beaulieu noted that students that were bussed last year will be bussed this year and Durham agreed, they are putting back the stops to last year. Mr. Costa reviewed what was going to happen over the next or so, routes/changes to Chief Desmarais by 10/7, Chief to complete review by 10/12 or 10/13, School Committee to approve 10/14, 10-25 or 10-27 to implement. Once the Chief approves the routes Durham will give the route format to the Superintendent and then the School Committee will get the updated routes.

Agenda Item #4: Discussion and Review of the Administrator Salary Schedule

Mr. Pearson asked that this item be on the agenda for the October 14, 2010 School Committee Meeting.

Agenda Item #5: Vote to go into Executive Session for Discussion on Items Referred to in R.I.G.L. 42-46-5: A. Personnel Matters – Exception (1)

1) CTA/ICSE

B. Negotiations/Litigation – Exception (2)

1) ICSE

2) Donna Morelle v. Cumberland School Committee

3) Potential Litigation

Mr. Pearson made a motion to go into Executive Session (A & B), 2nd by Mrs. Beaulieu, approved 6-0.

Agenda Item #6: Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Linda A. Jackvony